

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

UNCLAS VIENNA 003424

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR CA/VO/F/P - DLOPES DA ROSA; CA/EX -
JARZT; CA/PA - AAGGELER; EUR/AGS - VVIKMANIS KELLER;
DHS FOR MHARDIN

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [CVIS](#) [CMGT](#) [PREL](#) [AU](#)

SUBJECT: VISA WAIVER PROGRAM: AUSTRIA HAS NEW PROPOSAL
FOR FOIL TO MEET LEVEL 1 COMPLIANCE

REF: A) 192566 STATE, B) STATE 125862 C) STATE 111324,

C) VIENNA 3383 AND PREVIOUS

[1](#)1. This is an action request. See para. 7.

[1](#)2. Summary: The Austrian Interior Ministry officials has produced another proposal to meet the October 26, 2005 deadline for Level 1 compliance with the changed Visa Waiver Program (VWP) requirements. The GOA believes that it could now produce a "vignette" or visa foil-type insert to be placed in newly issued passports to provide the equivalent of the required digital photograph. Because of the significant expense production of such a foil would entail, and the need for a media campaign to inform the public to apply early, the GOA would need an immediate answer on whether to pursue this option. End Summary.

[1](#)3. ConGen met on Friday, October 21, 2005 with those MOI officials charged with producing the forthcoming Austrian biometric passport. They expressed disappointment that legislation authorizing the extension of the validity of Austrian passports which would otherwise have expired in the coming months would not be sufficient to enable the bearers to use the VWP, per emails the Austrian Embassy received from DHS. As long as France, Austria and Italy were given the same response on extensions, however, they said the decision is not politically unacceptable.

[1](#)4. The officials proposed a new approach, which would involve the insertion of a vignette, or visa-type foil, onto one of the visa pages of newly issued passports. The foil would be printed on secure paper, using the Schengen visa style format. It would include a digital photo, the bearer's bio-data, and a machine-readable zone (MRZ). After the U.S.-bound traveler applied for a passport at his local passport office, the office would forward the passport and an extra photo to the MOI in Vienna, where the photo would be scanned and printed onto the foil, along with the relevant data. The secure foil would then be stuck on one of the first, inner pages of the passport.

[1](#)5. The MOI estimates the passport processing time would be about one week, rather than the one-hour processing time Austrian citizen currently enjoy, but there would be no additional fee for the applicant to pay. Because of the considerable expense involved for the GOA and the lead time required for travelers needing passports in the upcoming weeks, the GOA requests that DHS indicate now whether this approach would even be considered as meeting Level 1 compliance.

[1](#)6. Post comment: The GOA would prefer to simply insert the foil into expiring passports, but is concerned that DHS might not find it acceptable to have an old photograph on the passport's bio-data page, and another, newer, digital photo on the foil. It is therefore willing to put the foil in newly-issued passports only. End Comment.

[1](#)7. Action Request: Implementation of the foil proposal would be expensive for the Austrians and it would be counter to U.S. interests for the Austrians to invest in the proposal if the U.S. does not see it as a viable option. Post therefore urgently requests guidance on whether this proposal is at all viable, or whether further information or discussion is required. The GOA would require a definite response NLT October 27, 2005, but asks for an indication ASAP on whether this plan might meet Level 1 compliance. Post contact is ConGen Charisse Phillips. To contact Phillips at any time over the October 22-23 weekend or on the October 26 holiday celebrating Austria's national day, please call (43) (1) 367-4404 or (43) 0664-811-7619, or email chariphillips@hotmail.com, or contact Post One at (43) (1) 31-339 2115.

Van Voorst